

Claims

1. Developer composition obtainable by
 - (a) providing water,
 - (b) dissolving such an amount of an alkaline component selected from alkali silicates, alkali hydroxides, Na_3PO_4 , K_3PO_4 , NR_4OH , wherein each R is independently selected from C_1 - C_4 alkyl groups and C_1 - C_4 hydroxyalkyl groups, and mixtures thereof in the water provided in step (a) that a pH of more than 12 is obtained, and
 - (c) dissolving a stabilizer selected from M_2CO_3 , MHCO_3 , or a mixture of 2 or more thereof, wherein each M is independently selected from Li, Na, K and NR'_4 and each R' independently represents H or C_1 - C_4 alkyl, in the solution obtained in step (b), wherein the amount of the added stabilizer is such that the amount of the added carbonate anion is 1.5 to 20 wt-%, based on the total weight of the developer composition.
2. Developer composition according to claim 1, wherein the added stabilizer is Na_2CO_3 .
3. Developer composition according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the stabilizer is added in such an amount that the amount of the added carbonate anion is 2.5 to 12 wt-%.
4. Developer composition according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the alkaline component comprises an alkali silicate.
5. Developer composition according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the pH value of the solution obtained in step (b) is in the range of from 13 to 14.
6. Developer composition according to any of claims 1 to 5, additionally comprising one or more additives selected from glycols, surfactants, anti-foaming agents, biocides, complexing agents and organic solvents.

7. Use of M_2CO_3 , $MHCO_3$ or a mixture thereof, wherein M is selected from Li, Na, K and NR'_4 wherein $R' = H$ or C_1 - C_4 alkyl, as pH stabilizer in aqueous alkaline developer solutions and replenishers having a pH of more than 12.
8. Use according to claim 7, wherein the developer solution or replenisher comprises an alkaline component selected from alkali silicates, alkali hydroxides, Na_3PO_4 , K_3PO_4 , NR_4OH , wherein each R is independently selected from C_1 - C_4 alkyl groups and C_1 - C_4 hydroxyalkyl groups, and mixtures thereof.
9. Process for producing a developer composition according to any of claims 1 to 6, comprising
 - (a) providing water,
 - (b) dissolving such an amount of an alkaline component selected from alkali silicates, alkali hydroxides, Na_3PO_4 , K_3PO_4 , NR_4OH , wherein each R is independently selected from C_1 - C_4 alkyl groups and C_1 - C_4 hydroxyalkyl groups, and mixtures thereof in the water provided in step (a) that a pH of more than 12 is obtained, and
 - (c) dissolving a stabilizer selected from M_2CO_3 , $MHCO_3$, or a mixture of 2 or more thereof, wherein each M is independently selected from Li, Na, K and NR'_4 and each R' independently represents H or C_1 - C_4 alkyl, in the solution obtained in step (b) wherein the amount of the added stabilizer is such that the amount of the added carbonate anion is 1.5 to 20 wt-%, based on the total weight of the developer composition.
10. Process according to claim 9, wherein before or after the dissolution of the stabilizer at least one additive selected from glycols, surfactants, anti-foaming agents, biocides, complexing agents and organic solvents is added.
11. Process for developing exposed printing plate precursors, comprising
 - (a) providing an image-wise exposed printing plate precursor,
 - (b) contacting the printing plate precursor of step (a) with a developer composition as defined in any of claims 1 to 6, and

(c) rinsing with water.

12. Process according to claim 11, wherein the image-wise exposed printing plate precursor is not developable with an aqueous developer having a pH of below 12.
13. Process according to claim 11 or 12, wherein the printing plate precursor is a UV-sensitive positive working printing plate precursor or a heat-sensitive printing plate precursor.
14. Process according to claim 13, wherein the radiation-sensitive coating of the printing plate precursor comprises a phenolic resin.
15. Concentrate comprising a developer composition as defined in any of claims 1 to 6, concentrated up to 10 times.